Meeting of the Cook Inlet Subarea PPOR Offshore Committee

May 11, 2007 9:00 AM
ADEC Conference Room
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK

Attendees:

John Bauer, ADEC
Vinnie Catalano, CIRCAC
Dale Gardner, ADEC
Meredith Gillman, USCG
Steve Howell, CIRCAC
Mark Janes, Nuka Research
John Kwietniak, Tesoro Alaska
Doug Lentsch, CISPRI
Doug Mutter, DOI
Scott Pegau, PWS-OSRI
Tim Robertson, Nuka Research
Susan Saupe, CIRCAC
John Whitney, NOAA

Dale Gardner opened the meeting of the Offshore Committee of the Cook Inlet Potential Places of Refuge (PPOR) Workgroup and gave a brief welcome, familiarized the group with the facility, and provided a safety briefing as well.

Tim Robertson reviewed the agenda and explained the workgroup decision that led to the calling of this meeting. The workgroup had considered the issue of an offshore PPOR for a stricken ship in the previous meeting but felt that the issue needed more in-depth consideration and tasked a subgroup to consider the following:

- Should an offshore place of refuge be designated as a separate PPOR or as an operational strategy?
- How would either designation fit into the PPOR section of the SCP?

Which locations in Cook Inlet will provide the best offshore sanctuary for a stricken or leaking vessel?

John Bauer explained that the issue of an offshore place of refuge arose during the Cook Inlet Navigational Forum. After consulting with John Whitney of NOAA, he felt that the CIPPOR Workgroup should consider designating one or more offshore areas as PPOR, since an offshore PPOR could possibly be used as a temporary lightering or stabilizing area under proper conditions.

Currently, all Cook Inlet PPOR are in, or adjacent to, environmentally sensitive areas. Providing a location off shore and away from sensitive areas could possibly prevent sensitive areas contamination from a leaking ship.

Dr. Whitney explained why he selected an area in lower Cook Inlet as a promising location for an offshore PPOR. The Cook Inlet currents are complex and vary with season, but areas of lesser current exist that have a gyre type circulation, which may create areas where spilled petroleum products would be less likely to spread rapidly and offer opportunities for recovery, if conditions are favorable. This is why he chose the particular location in lower Cook Inlet; he noted his experience with the T/V Glacier Bay

spill, and how the currents and movement of the vessel in central Cook Inlet caused the additional release and spread of oil.

The offshore committee then discussed this site and the potential problems that might occur when using such a location during an actual response.

Issues raised included:

- Offshore lightering is more like a strategy or tactic and not a place of refuge. Many areas exist as likely locations for offshore lightering, but each has limiting factors that must be considered.
- Whether or not a decision tree would be helpful for decision-makers in deciding whether to use an offshore PPOR or not.
- Offshore operation creates logistical considerations such as:
    - increased risk for responders,
    - an offshore oil spill response may require more robust response equipment and vessels,
    - an offshore response effort may not be as effective or present as many options as nearshore tactics,
    - booming the vessel in open waters probably would not be an option, and
    - the vessel may experience additional hull stress.
- Uncontained oil could travel out of Cook Inlet to other sensitive areas, e.g Kodiak

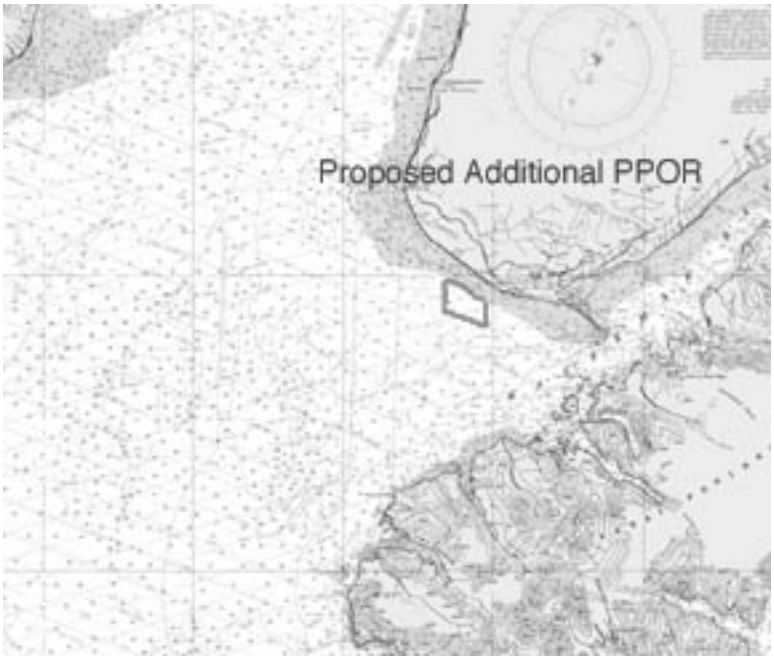
The committee considered additional offshore areas that present a similar situation for lightering and stabilization, while increasing the opportunity for logistical support and maximizing nearshore response capabilities.

In looking at the history of stricken vessels in Cook Inlet, committee members noted that the T/V Chesapeake Trader anchored in the area south of Bluff Point in Kachemak Bay after experiencing a leak in the winter of 1999. Additionally, vessels use this same area to anchor when ice conditions prohibit transit north or they have to wait for berthing space. The committee discussed considerations for this area.

The committee concurred that while the offshore area near Bluff Point is in outer Kachemak Bay and more exposed to wind and rough seas than the anchorages behind the Homer Spit, the area does offer the following benefits:

- logistical support is in closer proximity than the location identified in lower Cook Inlet by John Whitney,
- the waters in this area are shallow enough for good anchoring and containment boom deployment,
- generally, the currents move out of Kachemak Bay and would take spilled petroleum products away from the sensitive areas that lie within the bay,
- the area is in the lee of predominant north and northeasterly winds during the winter months, and
- the nearby shoreline is sandy and more amenable to cleanup.

Since the Bluff Point location offers the most promise, additional study will be undertaken in the development of this site as a PPOR and weather considerations will be explored as part of site considerations. The Bluff Point location will be vetted by SWAPA pilots and specified to a smaller anchoring area. The contractor will then add the necessary information to the Kachemak Bay PPOR document showing this location as a PPOR. (Dr. Scott Pegau submitted additional current maps that reinforced the suitability of this area as a PPOR.)



Boxed area outlines possible Potential Place of Refuge.

Action items from the meeting include:

- Nuka Research will draft additional language for the Introductory Section that will discuss the strategy of offshore lightering in lieu of bringing a leaking vessel into a sensitive area.
- Nuka Research will submit the proposed additional PPOR to SWAPA for their input.
- Nuka Research will revise the Kachemak Bay PPOR map to include the anchoring site.
- The revised plans will be posted to the web for the entire CIPPOR Workgroup to consider and comment on.